

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6013

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0255

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA, US

SUBJECT: CALL ON LAO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF
EDUCATION, SPORTS AND RELIGION PHOUMI VONGVICHIT

1. RESUMING COURTESY CALLS, JANUARY 30 I VISITED PHOUMI VONGVICHIT, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF EDUCATION, SPORTS AND RELIGION, WHO IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE POLITBURO OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (LPRP). PHOUMI RECEIVED ME ALONE AND WE SPOKE IN FRENCH. AFTER THANKING ME FOR MY VISIT PHOUMI SAID THE LAO WANTED RELATIONS WITH AND UNCONDITIONAL AID FROM ALL FRIENDLY COUNTRIES INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES. HE SAID HE HOPED THE UNITED STATES WOULD HELP IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF LAOS AND THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD AGREE TO THE NEW DRAFT AGREEMENT ON BILATERAL AID WHICH HE HAD PROPOSED TO MY PREDECESSOR TO REPLACE THE 1951 BILATERAL AGREEMENT WHICH HAD BEEN OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS.

2. I REVIEWED, AS I HAVE DURING MY OTHER CALLS, OUR DESIRE FOR
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NORMAL RELATIONS WITH LAOS, THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PROMPT

STATEMENT ON CONTINUED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AND THE PORTION ON INDOCHINA OF PRESIDENT FORD'S DECEMBER 7 REMARKS IN HONOLULU.

I ALSO WENT OVER THE END OF USAID IN LAOS AT LAO REQUEST, POINTED OUT THAT I WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO DISCUSS ASSISTANCE MATTERS AND AGAIN REFERRED TO THE "HEALING EFFECTS OF TIME" CITED IN THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS.

3. IN THE COURSE OF THE CONVERSATION WHICH LASTED 30 MINUTES, PHOUMI MADE THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS.

4. HE INTENDED TO KEEP FRENCH TEACHERS IN THE LAO SYSTEM UNTIL THOSE LAO STUDENTS CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN FRENCH STYLE CURRICULA HAD COMPLETED THEIR STUDIES. THEN ALL EDUCATION WOULD BE CONDUCTED IN LAO. HOWEVER, THE LAO SYSTEM WOULD TEACH ENGLISH, FRENCH, RUSSIAN, SPANISH AND PERHAPS CHINESE, AS FOREIGN LANGUAGES. THE COUNTRY NEEDED INTERPRETERS QUALIFIED IN THE WORLD LANGUAGES. HE WOULD STILL HOPE TO SEND LAO STUDENTS TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES, FOR UNIVERSITY LEVEL TRAINING WHICH THE LAO WANTED TO BE "AT THE WORLD LEVEL."

5. THE UNITED STATES HAD HELPED LAOS IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD IN THE PAST AND HE HOPED IT WOULD AGAIN. THE MAIN LAO NEED WAS FOR TEXTS AND TEACHERS. IF THE TEACHERS WERE NOT EXPERT, AS WAS THE CASE WITH MANY OF THE LAO TEACHERS NOW, THE TEXT BOOKS BECAME EVEN MORE IMPORTANT. WRITING TEXTS AND GETTING THEM PRINTED WAS A DIFFICULT MATTER.

6. THERE WAS NO REASON WHY THOSE LAO WHO HAD LEFT THE COUNTRY COULD NOT RETURN. EVEN THOSE WHO HAD BEEN CONVICTED OF CRIMES COULD COME BACK AND MAKE CONFESSIONS AND HE THOUGHT "THE PEOPLE" WOULD FORGIVE THEM. AFTER ALL, LAOS ONLY HAD ABOUT 3,000,000 PEOPLE AND IT WOULD NOT BE IN THEIR INTEREST TO KILL OR IMPRISON A LOT OF THEM. OF COURSE, A NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO HAD MADE PERSONAL PROFITS THROUGH VARIOUS FRAUDULENT TRANSACTIONS NOW FEARED "THE PEOPLE" AND WERE AFRAID TO COME BACK.

7. THE LAO WANTED GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALL COUNTRIES AND
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ESPECIALLY WITH NEIGHBORS LIKE THAILAND. IT WAS IN THE INTEREST OF BOTH THAILAND AND LAOS TO HAVE THE FRONTIER OPEN FOR TRADE.

8. COMMENT: PHOUMI FOLLOWED THE OFFICIAL LINE ON GOOD RELATIONS, UNCONDITIONAL RECONSTRUCTION AID AND AN OPEN FRONTIER WITH THAILAND. HOWEVER, I THINK HE GOT A BIT AHEAD OF HIMSELF IN SUGGESTING THE PDRL WOULD WELCOME U.S. CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD AND I DOUBT THAT ANY RETURNEES WOULD BE

"FORGIVEN" ALL THAT EASILY.
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